

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 OMB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 HA-05 SAA-01 SES-02
/091 W

-----127651 080659Z /10

P R 080551Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9092
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN

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ALEXANDRIA PLEASE PASS S/S

DEPARTMENT PASS AID/W

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, PEPR, US, SY
SUBJ: MISSION EFFORTS TO COUNTER NEGATIVE SYRIAN REACTION TO
HOUSE VOTE ON AID SUSPENSION

1. CHARGE CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN
AFFAIRS SIAGE AUGUST 5 TO DISCUSS HOUSE VOTE. EMPHASIZED
DEPARTMENT'S EFFORTS TO DEFEND SYRIAN PROGRAM AND FACT THEY
WOULD BE CONTINUING. ALSO DISCUSSED BACKGROUND TO HOUSE
VOTE DRAWING ON DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE AND LEFT WITH HIM
BACKGROUND PAPER ON VOTE AND ITS EFFECT. SIAGE SAID HE
WOULD INFORM FONMIN AND DEPUTY FONMIN OF THESE
CLARIFICATIONS AND NOTED THAT POSITIVE STATMENT BY DEPARTMENT
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OF STATE SPOKESMAN HAD BEEN RECEIVED WITH SATISFACTION IN
MINISTRY. SIAGE SAID IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR SYRIA TO
UNDERSTAND WHY CONGRESS APPEARED SO OPPOSED TO SYRIA'S
ROLE IN LEBANON. THIS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED MANY TIMES
BY US AND SYRIA, AND US HAD GENERALLY SUPPORTED SYRIA'S
EFFORTS TO RESTORE ORDER AND REUNITE LEBANON UNDER ITS
LEGITIMATE PRESIDENT. DID THESE CONGRESSMEN KNOW THAT SYRIA

AND SYRIA ALONE HAD SAVED LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AGAINST ANIHILATION BY PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE LEFT? DID CONGRESS REALIZE HOW MUCH THIS VOTE WOULD ENCOURAGE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN PRESSING TOWARD PARTITION?

2. AID DIRECTOR RAMSEY CALLED ON MINSTATE FOR PLANNING AFFAIRS HORANIYEH EVENING AUGUST 5 TO EXPLAIN VOTE AND LEAVE SAME BACKGROUND PAPER. HORANIYEH SAID SYRIAN CABINET HAD BEEN FOLLOWING NEWS REPORTS OF HOUSE ACTION CLOSELY. THEY FELT CONGRESSMEN DERWINSKI'S STATEMENTS ABOUT RECENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT WERE VERY ONE SIDED AND DID NOT TAKE ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIAN PROVOCATIONS. HE SAID DESPITE FONMIN KHADDAM'S STRONG REACTION TO HOUSE VOTE, SARG RECOGNIZED US ADMINISTRATION OPPOSED HOUSE POSITION AND WAS DOING ITS BEST TO PRESENT A BALANCED ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON.

3. HORANIYEH SAID WE COULD EXPECT SYRIAN PEOPLES COUNCIL TO GIVE SARG A VERY ROUGH TIME WHEN NEW FY 78 PROJECT AGREEMENTS WERE PRESENTED FOR RATIFICATION. CRITICISM OF SYRIAN MINISTERS FOR AGREEING TO PROVISIONS IN THE AGREEMENTS DEALING WITH AID'S APPROVAL OF CONTRACTS, AID'S RIGHT TO AUDIT, CONDITIONS PERTAINING TO DISBURSEMENTS, ETC. COULD BE EXPECTED. HORANIYEH THANKED RAMSEY FOR TAKING INITIATIVE TO INFORM HIM OF HOUSE ACTION AND PROVIDING HIM THE BACKGROUND ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAY US LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM WORKS.

4. CHARGE CALLED ON MINECON AND FOREIGN TRADE IMADI AUGUST 6 TO GIVE SIMILAR PRESENTATION. HE TOLD IMADI SECRETARY HAD TESTIFIED BEFORE HIRC AUGUST 4 IN FAVOR OF SYRIAN PROGRAM. IMADI WENT CAREFULLY THROUGH OUR BACKGROUND PAPER AND SAID HE WOULD TRY TO EXPLAIN US ACTION TO THE PRIME MINISTER. PRIME MINISTER'S INITIAL REACTION, HAD BEEN HARSH--A COMBINATION OF OUTRAGE OF US REPRESENTATIVES' LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON, AND EMOTIONAL REACTION THAT SYRIA COULD DO WITHOUT US AID. IMADI ADDED HIS OWN VIEW THAT SYRIA AND US HAD BEEN WORKING TOGETHER IN ATTEMPT TO SOLVE LEBANESE SITUATION AND IT WAS THIS COOPERATION CONGRESS WAS VOTING AGAINST. HE THANKED CHARGE FOR COMING TO HIM AND SAID HE WOULD TRY TO PUT SITUATION IN PERSPECTIVE IN HIS TALKS WITH OTHER OFFICIALS. HOWEVER, EVEN RESTORING ALL THE FY 79 PROGRAM WOULD NOT FULLY REPAIR THE DAMAGE, HE SAID.

5. INSERT. DURING AUGUST 6 MEETING WITH FONMIN KHADDAM ON DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON, CHARGE CONVEYED SECRETARY'S MESSAGE THAT HE AND OTHERS IN ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE WORKING TO RESTORE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SYRIA.

KHADDAM CHOSE NOT TO REACT TO THIS PORTION OF PRESENTATION.

6. OTHER DIPLOMATS HAVE PASSED ON TO US SEVERAL COMMENTS THAT SHOW GREATER SYRIAN ANGER AND LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF HOUSE ACTION THAN WE HAVE HEARD DIRECTLY. ONE SAID HE HAD HEARD FROM A SYRIAN OFFICIAL WHO ACCOMPANIED FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM TO LATAKIA LAST WEEK, THAT KHADDAM HAD BURST INTO ANGER AT HEARING NEWS OF HOUSE VOTE. UK AMBASSADOR WAS TREATED TO LONG DIATRIBU BY MININFO ISKANDER AHMAD HOLDING US RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERIORATION IN LEBANON AND LINKING HOUSE VOTE TO "ZIONIST DESIGNS" THERE. COMMENT: WE WILL BE HEARING MORE OF THIS BEFORE WE HEAR LESS, BUT BELIEVE WE HAVE TAKEN PRODUCTIVE STEPS TO LIMITE THE DAMAGE TO PUT VOTE IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PERSPECTIVE AMONG THOSE OFFICIALS MOST INVOLVED IN THIS ASPECT OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS.
PELLETREAU

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